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FIFTH PROGRESS REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL ON THE UNITED NATIONS OBSERVER MISSION IN LIBERIA

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The present report is submitted in response to Security Council resolution 911 (1994) of 21 April 1994, by which the Council extended the mandate of the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL) for a period of six months, until 22 October 1994. The Security Council took this decision on the understanding that it would, by 18 May 1994, review the situation in Liberia, including the role played by UNOMIL in that country, based on a report on whether or not the Council of State of the Liberian National Transitional Government had been fully installed, and on whether there had been substantial progress in disarmament and in implementing the peace process. Accordingly, on 18 May 1994, I submitted to the Security Council a report (S/1994/588) describing progress on these aspects of the peace process.

2. On 23 May 1994, the President of the Security Council issued a statement (S/PRST/1994/25), expressing the Council's satisfaction with the full installation of the Council of State and with indications that the Liberian National Transitional Government had begun to assume its responsibilities and functions throughout the country. At the same time, however, the President expressed the Council's concern that political differences and renewed violence among and within certain factions had stalled the disarmament process. The Council reaffirmed its intention to review the situation in Liberia on or before 30 June 1994, including the role played by UNOMIL, progress with respect to the effective operation of the Liberian National Transitional Government, disarmament and demobilization, as well as preparations for the holding of elections on 7 September 1994. The Council also requested me to prepare options by 30 June regarding the future implementation of UNOMIL's mandate and its continued operations.

II. POLITICAL ASPECTS

3. Following its seating on 7 March 1994, in accordance with the Cotonou Agreement (S/26272, annex), the Council of State began the task of swearing Cabinet Ministers into office. To date, all Cabinet Ministers have been sworn into office and the Cabinet held its first meeting on 13 May 1994. As regards

positions of Deputy Ministers, those allocated to the Interim Government of National Unity (IGNU) and the National Patriotic Front for Liberia (NPFL) have been filled. The internal conflict within the United Liberation Movement for Democracy in Liberia (ULIMO) has, however, held up the assignment of the Deputy Ministerial posts set aside for that party.

4. The Council of State has met on a regular basis. Quite recently, both the Council and the Transitional Legislative Assembly have embarked upon a series of visits to Gbarnga, Tubmanburg and Buchanan to carry messages of peace and reconciliation to the leaders of the warring factions. In this way, attempts are being made to extend civil authority and give a lead to the national reconciliation process. Furthermore, consideration is being given to the appointment of local government officials, to the reactivation of economic activities and to the restructuring of State-owned enterprises. The Liberian National Transitional Government is, for example, having discussions with officials of the Firestone Company with a view to reopening their plantation and thereby creating jobs. This would be a major incentive to disarmament.

5. However, the issue of appointing heads of the autonomous agencies and public corporations remains unresolved. NPFL and ULIMO consider that it is their prerogative to nominate candidates to head these institutions. Such appointments have, in the past, been made by the executive branch of the Government, i.e., the Council of State. The Cotonou Agreement, however, did not specify the body now responsible for them. NPFL and ULIMO have advanced the argument that if the Government is to include the participation of all the parties, the parties should be responsible for the allocation of these posts. A compromise is being sought which, while acknowledging the legitimate role of the Council in this regard, will also facilitate full consultations with the parties. If not resolved, this issue could further delay the peace process.

6. Beyond the difficulties the Liberian National Transitional Government is experiencing in the filling of the vacant posts, the continuing fighting within and between parties constitutes the most serious obstacle standing in the way of the peace process. As I pointed out in my previous report (S/1994/588), prior to the installation of the Council of State, a dispute arose within the leadership of ULIMO, along ethnic lines, between Chairman Alhaji Kromah (Mandingo) and General Roosevelt Johnson (Krahn) over ULIMO nominees to the Council of State. This dispute resulted in an outbreak of fighting in the western region among the ULIMO forces and the displacement of some 36,000 people since February 1994. Mediation efforts involving Chairman Valentine Strasser, Head of State of Sierra Leone, UNOMIL, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Cease-fire Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), Liberian organizations specializing in conflict resolution, elders of both ethnic groups and other prominent Liberians resulted, on 6 May, in a cease-fire and an agreement for further negotiations. Regrettably, the negotiations collapsed and serious fighting resumed on 26 May in Tubmanburg.

7. The central issue in the ULIMO negotiations is the question of how to meet the Krahn's desire for representation in the Transitional Government. The Council of State has indicated its readiness to facilitate this and has encouraged consultation among the ULIMO groups. In the search for a solution to the ULIMO conflict, the Special Representative has cautioned the leaders of

both groups that the disintegration of ULIMO as an organization could disrupt and possibly destroy the peace process.

8. In the eastern part of Liberia, attacks by the Liberian Peace Council (LPC), an armed group formed after the signing of the Cotonou Agreement, against the NPFL constitute another major impediment to the peace process. LPC, comprising essentially Krahn combatants, has attacked and occupied several areas previously controlled by NPFL. This conflict has been directly responsible for the displacement, since February 1994, of an estimated 50,000 persons to Buchanan. In addition, NPFL remains unwilling to disarm as long as LPC continues its offensive. The Liberian National Transitional Government, UNOMIL and ECOMOG continue to pursue mediation efforts to bring about a cease-fire between the two parties that, if successful, would lead to disengagement of forces and formal involvement of LPC in the disarmament and demobilization process.

9. The parties' mistrust for one another has, in the case of some parties, extended to ECOMOG. In this context, ECOMOG's role as a peace-keeper has become increasingly complex in the performance of its security role.

10. Soldiers of the Nigerian and Ugandan contingents have recently been abducted and held for varying lengths of time by Mandingo elements of ULIMO and LPC, both of which have claimed that ECOMOG has become involved in the conflict. Two soldiers are yet to be released by ULIMO and UNOMIL continues its efforts to obtain their release. Furthermore, ECOMOG has been accused, primarily by NPFL, of arbitrariness and inflexibility in its surveillance of Liberians who travel to and from NPFL territory, especially on the Gbarnga-Monrovia axis. The Liberian National Transitional Government is consulting with ECOMOG on how it might best assume a greater share of responsibility for the country's internal security, as civil authority is extended.

11. NPFL has also asserted complicity between some elements of ECOMOG and the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) in supplying material and logistical support to LPC. In view of the potential implications of these assertions for the peace process, my Special Representative has discussed the issue with the Chairman of ECOWAS and the Field Commander of ECOMOG. He has advised me that ECOMOG is treating the assertions with seriousness and that the Field Commander has undertaken an investigation of the matter. Meanwhile, the Chairman of ECOWAS and the Field Commander reaffirm that it is not the policy of ECOWAS or ECOMOG to support any faction in the Liberian conflict. There is no doubt, however, that the level of mistrust between NPFL and ECOMOG has been heightened as a result of these claims.

12. However, ECOMOG's role in the four-year civil conflict in Liberia has been widely acknowledged as an innovation in regional peace-keeping. The addition of troops from the United Republic of Tanzania and Uganda has added a highly-valued Organization of African Unity (OAU) dimension to the operation. The efforts of ECOMOG, though questioned by some factions, have been greatly appreciated by most Liberians, as well as the international community, which recognizes the human and financial sacrifice made by the West African Governments.

13. Nevertheless, under the present circumstances of mistrust and hostilities between and within some factions, and despite the efforts of ECOMOG and UNOMIL, the parties have refused to engage actively in the disarmament of their combatants or to give up control of territory. As a result, the Council of State has found it difficult to exert its authority throughout the entire country and this impedes the advancement of the peace process.

14. An additional cause for serious concern is the failure of the international community to provide financial support for those Governments which have contributed to ECOMOG. At the summit meeting of the Organization of African Unity at Tunis earlier this month both the President of Nigeria and the Chairman of ECOWAS, President Soglo of Benin, drew my attention to the financial burden that the troop-contributing countries, particularly Nigeria, were carrying as a result of their contribution to ECOMOG. Nigeria specifically said that it would have to withdraw its contingents unless a solution could be found to the problem. I urged them that troops should not be withdrawn precipitately and undertook to endeavour to obtain additional financial support from Member States which are in a position to provide it. I am actively pursuing this matter and will report to the Security Council as necessary.

III. MILITARY ASPECTS

15. In accordance with its concept of operations, UNOMIL had planned to deploy 39 military observer teams in three phases, by March 1994. By mid-June, however, owing to the security situation in various areas of the country, only 29 teams had been deployed in their respective locations (see attached map). Since December 1993, there have been 12 incidents in which United Nations military observers have been harassed, their possessions taken and/or United Nations vehicles and radios confiscated. ULIMO has been responsible for six, LPC for one, and NPFL for five of these incidents. Only in three cases have the items been recovered.

16. In the western region, insecurity in upper Lofa county impeded the deployment of military observers. Aerial reconnaissance in this region was carried out in May and deployment will be undertaken subject to improvement of the security situation and to the deployment of ECOMOG forces. Problems resulting from fighting within ULIMO necessitated the temporary withdrawal in May 1994 of the Kongo Border Crossing Team in Grand Cape Mount county to Monrovia. This team will be redeployed to that area once UNOMIL has received the necessary assurances regarding its security.

17. Full deployment has been completed in the central and northern regions. In the eastern region, only four out of nine teams have been deployed. Efforts are being made to obtain the concurrence of NPFL in undertaking reconnaissance missions in the areas near Tobli and Zwedru, which are a necessary preparation for any further deployment in the area.

18. Over the past three months, ECOMOG has deployed its troops further west and north. In the western region, ECOMOG deployed in the towns and villages of Kle, Robertsport, Tubmanburg, Tiene, Bo and Kongo. In the northern region, deployment has only been effected in Gbarnga. ECOMOG's plan to deploy

throughout the country has not yet materialized. Mutual mistrust between NPFL and some elements of ECOMOG, stemming from the period when ECOMOG undertook peace enforcement measures and from the assertions referred to above, has greatly inhibited further ECOMOG deployment in the northern and eastern regions.

IV. DEMOBILIZATION AND REINTEGRATION

19. According to the information provided by the parties, it is estimated that a total number of approximately 54,000 adult and 6,000 child combatants will have to be demobilized. Three months after the start of demobilization, a total oi 3,192 combatants have been demobilized (ULIMO, 739; NPFL, 731; AFL, 685). During this period, 1,951 weapons, 166,079 rounds of assorted ammunition and 19 pieces of plastic explosives were surrendered by the warring parties.

20. Four demobilization camps are operational. Only an average of 10 combatants a day are currently being disarmed. Before NPFL declared that it would stop the disarmament of its combatants, 1,500 NPFL combatants had been congregated in one assembly area ready to disarm. These combatants are still in the area and are receiving food rations from UNOMIL. As noted earlier, mistrust, lack of commitment and, in some instances, open hostility between and among the various parties and other armed groups have been and continue to be the principal reasons for the slow pace of disarmament.

21. Three rehabilitation centres for child combatants have been opened and 180 child fighters have been disarmed and demobilized. Of those, 130 have been successfully reunited with their families and 50 remain in the centres for longer care. Twelve children attempted to leave the programme prematurely but returned after a short period. Psychological support is given to the children by a team of social workers under the supervision of a psychologist. Substance abuse, particularly marijuana, is evident among the children. This programme, run by a local non-governmental organization, is financed through voluntary contributions.

22. Recognizing that employment is a major incentive for ex-combatants to return to normal life, the World Food Programme (WFP) has initiated a food-for-work programme involving 1,200 ex-combatants in a National Volunteer Scheme of labour-intensive tasks. Such tasks include urban sanitation, agricultural and other activities in Monrovia and Konola. Resources permitting, this approach will be replicated around the country.

V. ELECTORAL PROCESS

23. The Security Council will recall that in my last report (S/1994/588), I indicated my intention to send a team of international experts to Liberia in order to consult with the Liberian National Transitional Government and the Elections Commission. The team visited Liberia from 26 May to 4 June 1994 and met with members of the Council of State, the Cabinet and the Legislative Assembly. The team also participated in three public forums, including one held in Monrovia with 200 officials of more than 20 political parties, and two held in Gbarnga and Harper.

24. The team's discussions centred on the timetable for the forthcoming presidential and general elections and the operational and other constraints to be overcome if elections are to be held on the scheduled date of 7 September 1994. Such constraints include, inter alia, voter registration, identification of candidates, constituency boundaries, and resource requirements. There was widespread agreement among the Liberians with whom the team consulted that substantial progress in disarming combatants was an absolute prerequisite for the holding of free and fair elections. One political party, however, while reiterating its commitment to disarmament, observed that it was also of critical importance that elections be held on the scheduled date.

25. Officials of the Transitional Government and the political parties have requested more information on the system of proportional representation, which, under the prevailing circumstances, would facilitate the organization of the elections. The political parties have requested my Special Representative to convene a series of meetings with the Elections Commission, the UNOMIL Electoral Observer and the United Nations Development Programme Electoral Adviser to review preparations and assist in establishing ground rules for the elections. Eventually, the choice of the electoral system in Liberia will be made by the Liberian authorities.

VI. HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

26. Reports on food distribution indicate that of a possible 1,500,000 people in need, approximately 1,100,000 are receiving humanitarian assistance at this time. An estimated 400,000 people are inaccessible in sections of the south-east, Lofa and, most recently, Cape Mount and Bomi counties. Of the total number of beneficiaries, 800,000 are registered as displaced, of whom 150,000 were displaced within the last six months. This brings the monthly requirement of food for distribution to 12,000 metric tons. For 1994, 70 per cent of the estimated food needs have been mobilized by the international relief community, including the United Nations agencies and organizations and non-governmental organizations.

27. Owing to intra-factional conflict within ULIMO, 20,000 people fled to Monrovia in February and March. Since fighting broke out on 26 May, 16,000 people have been displaced in Tubmanburg, taking refuge at the UNOMIL and ECOMOG bases and the hospital. These people are in need of food, medical care, shelter and water. Humanitarian convoys accompanied by heavy ECOMOG escorts are reaching them with supplies. ECOMOG confirms its ability to provide adequate security and the population has displayed its confidence in this by massing around the ECOMOG base.

28. Fighting in the south-east continues to be disruptive. Civilians displaced from that area, totalling 50,000, have been arriving in Buchanan since February. Reports have been received indicating that 2,000 civilians are trapped in the Liberia Agricultural Compound where LPC has restricted their movement.

29. On 17 May, an inter-agency assessment took place in Greenville, Sinoe county, facilitated by an ECOMOG vessel. Food was also delivered to civilians who were found to be malnourished. The hospital was depleted of supplies. A

second mission in mid-June replenished the hospital and delivered 105 metric tons of food.

30. An increase in malnutrition has been noted in some accessible parts of the country, such as in Nimba and parts of Bong county. In Nimba, an international non-governmental organization has reported that the severe malnutrition rate increased from 4.3 to 6.7 per cent between February and May 1994. Among the factors related to the increase in malnutrition were the arrival of some 20,000 repatriating refugees and newly displaced persons from the south-east and Upper Lofa county, as well as deteriorating road conditions during the rainy season. Bridge repairs are being carried out along the main distribution routes to ease the delivery problems, and emergency food distributions to the displaced population have also been accelerated in the past month.

31. A positive impact of returnees, especially in Nimba County, is the reopening of 106 schools with a registration of 16,000 students. This is because of the return of many teachers and school-feeding programmes supported by the World Food Programme and the non-governmental organizations.

32. Satisfactory improvement in nutritional status continues to be seen in other parts of the country, especially in Montserrado, Margibi and Buchanan, where coordination among the relief agencies has improved.

33. In the past two months, 1,800 metric tons of seed rice have been distributed in five counties, including Maryland in the south-east. In addition, 40,000 farmers have benefited from tool distribution. It is anticipated that by the end of June, 40 per cent of the seed needs will have been met throughout the country.

34. Organized voluntary repatriation of the 700,000 Liberian refugees has been equally affected by the slow pace in the peace process. However, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) continues to facilitate the spontaneous repatriation of refugees. An average of 1,000 persons have been returning every month from Guinea, Côte d'Ivoire and Sierra Leone to areas in Nimba and Bong counties as well as to Monrovia and its environs. Depending on the success of the spontaneous returnee programme and on advances in the peace process, UNHCR is considering launching a pilot project for organized repatriation to areas which are safe and accessible. This will be accompanied by fund-raising for rehabilitating basic social infrastructure in areas of return to improve the absorptive capacity of those communities. Assistance to Sierra Leonean refugees in Upper Lofa has not resumed because of insecurity in the area. UNHCR is looking into the possibility of mounting a cross-border operation to Upper Lofa from Guinea, if security permits.

VII. PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

35. The civil conflict in Liberia has been characterized by major abuses of human rights. All factions share the blame. The use of 6,000 children in combat is a flagrant example of disregard for the rights of the child. The Lutheran Church massacre in 1990, which claimed the life of 600 innocent civilians, and the Harbel massacre of June 1992, where another 600 innocents

were slaughtered in a five-hour period, are but extreme examples of atrocities which have been committed throughout the country.

36. Disregard for human life continues in some quarters. My Special Representative has visited Buchanan, where he has spoken to displaced civilians who report abuses such as branding with scalding machetes and other methods of torture which they firmly attribute to LPC.

37. Women, who have throughout the conflict been victims of mental and physical abuse, continue to suffer. In Buchanan, the non-governmental organization Assistance to Women and Girls (AWAG) is providing counselling to 90 women, all of whom, since February, have been raped by combatants. The youngest victim receiving care is 12 years old.

38. The widespread allegations of human rights violations have not as yet been transformed into verifiable data by either international human rights groups or by the four main Liberian voluntary human rights organizations, namely, the Centre for Law and Human Rights Education, the Justice and Peace Commission, the Liberian Human Rights Chapter and the Liberia Watch for Human Rights. These institutions are currently the repositories of hundreds of preliminary reports of violations in all parts of the country. However, the institutions have so far been unable systematically to verify reports of abuses because of continuing insecurity and other technical and logistical difficulties.

39. My Special Representative has been holding discussions on these and related issues with the Liberian human rights organizations. In pursuance of Security Council resolution 866 (1993) of 22 September 1993, which mandated UNOMIL to report to me any major violations of international humanitarian law, a joint plan of action has been developed. The principal objective of this plan is to increase public awareness of human rights and their relationship to the reconciliation process. It is hoped that these collective efforts will enhance the Liberian capacity to investigate and verify incidents of abuse; develop a technical capacity for storage and retrieval of relevant data and information; set minimum standards for reporting and monitoring; and stimulate greater public understanding of individual and community responsibility for the reporting of abuses, which may ultimately become a deterrent against perpetrators.

40. In this respect, consideration is also being given to the establishment of a national committee on human rights that would involve the appropriate agencies of the Transitional Government, the Liberian Bar Association and the four human rights organizations mentioned above. Agreement has already been reached by representatives of these organizations on a draft questionnaire to be used for the collection of data. Work is also proceeding on defining the elements for standardized approaches for checking, verification and subsequent investigation of these reports. A public information programme is being developed aiming to increase awareness of the contribution that social justice, fairness and equity can make to improved governance.

VIII. OBSERVATIONS

41. The continuing hostilities of recent months have led to new population displacements and have placed additional demands on relief organizations in Liberia. In addition to the political imperative of complete disarmament and demobilization in accordance with the Cotonou Agreement, I would appeal, on humanitarian grounds, to all armed factions in Liberia to cease their hostilities and extend full cooperation to organizations engaged in the delivery of humanitarian assistance. I commend the efforts of the United Nations agencies and NGOs in responding to those in need in Liberia, often under dangerous and difficult conditions. I would also encourage donors to continue to respond positively to the requests addressed to them for assistance in meeting the urgent needs of newly displaced persons.

42. There are pockets of security in Liberia where the Liberian National Transitional Government is attempting to extend its civil authority and I encourage the Transitional Government to continue its efforts to this end. Emergency humanitarian assistance will be required in Liberia well into the future but as conditions improve in several counties Liberians will be able to redirect their efforts to self-sustaining and productive endeavours.

43. The present insecurity and restricted commercial activities constrain Liberian efforts to energize the reconciliation process, to speed up recovery and to establish a sustainable basis for improved governance and greater public participation. The impact of the economic sanctions currently placed on certain areas of Liberia has also contributed to the sluggishness of the economy. My Special Representative has advised me that the Liberian National Transitional Government is addressing these issues on several fronts and that it is planning to discuss with ECOWAS the issue of economic sanctions. It has also set out policy considerations in important economic and human development areas by proposing a linkage between the reintegration of ex-combatants and economic development and the restructuring of public sector management. The Government's concerns about these issues are to be presented at an informal consultation of donors in Abidjan scheduled to take place during the week of 20 June 1994. These initiatives are important steps forward in the reconciliation process and they represent a necessary focus on the immediate and medium-term requirements of recovery. I encourage donors to support the Liberian National Transitional Government in this direction.

44. The deployment of the ECOMOG forces and the UNOMIL observers in all parts of Liberia will be critical in generating confidence among Liberians throughout the country. In this regard, the Cotonou Agreement recognized the neutrality and authority of ECOMOG in supervising its implementation. I remain satisfied by the collaboration between UNOMIL and ECOMOG at senior levels. It is necessary to remind the international community that ECOMOG continues to require its financial support in order to fulfil its responsibilities in accordance with the Cotonou Agreement, and I call on the international community to contribute to the United Nations Trust Fund set up for this purpose. I am also pleased to learn that ECOMOG is investigating alleged reports of misconduct by some of its soldiers, as the effective disarmament and demobilization of the warring factions require the continued confidence of all Liberians in ECOMOG.

45. In his statement of 23 May 1994 (S/PRST/1994/25), the President of the Security Council conveyed the Council's request to me to prepare options by 30 June 1994 regarding the future implementation of UNOMIL's mandate and its continued operations. As I have consistently stated in previous reports, I believe that the basis for the establishment and maintenance of lasting peace and stability in Liberia is the faithful implementation of the Cotonou Agreement. I continue to believe that UNOMIL's mandate is relevant to the circumstances in Liberia and that the Mission's efforts are critical to the implementation of the Cotonou Agreement and to assisting the Liberian National Transitional Government and the Liberian people to achieve national reconciliation.

46. With the full installation of the Transitional Government and its various administrative instruments, significant progress has been made in the implementation of the Cotonou Agreement. The Transitional Government is a most important building block for the future. At the same time, however, it is my view that the various Liberian interests, and in particular, the leaders of the warring factions, have not yet addressed national reconciliation with the necessary resolve, compassion and commitment. Their lack of resolve has led to increased suffering, especially among the displaced population. UNOMIL can only assist the Liberian National Transitional Government and the Liberian parties to bring peace to their country; the main responsibility is with the Liberian National Transitional Government and the parties.

47. Bearing this in mind, it is imperative that all the Liberian parties extend a greater cooperation to ECOMOG and UNOMIL in order to move the peace process forward and achieve the objectives outlined in the Cotonou Agreement, including the holding of national elections. The delays which have been experienced in the implementation of the Cotonou Agreement cannot be allowed to continue. The Security Council may accordingly wish to consider the possibility of laying down specific monthly targets which must be met by the Liberian parties, particularly with respect to disarmament and demobilization of combatants. My Special Representative will be ready to advise the Liberian parties on how targets set by the Security Council can be met.

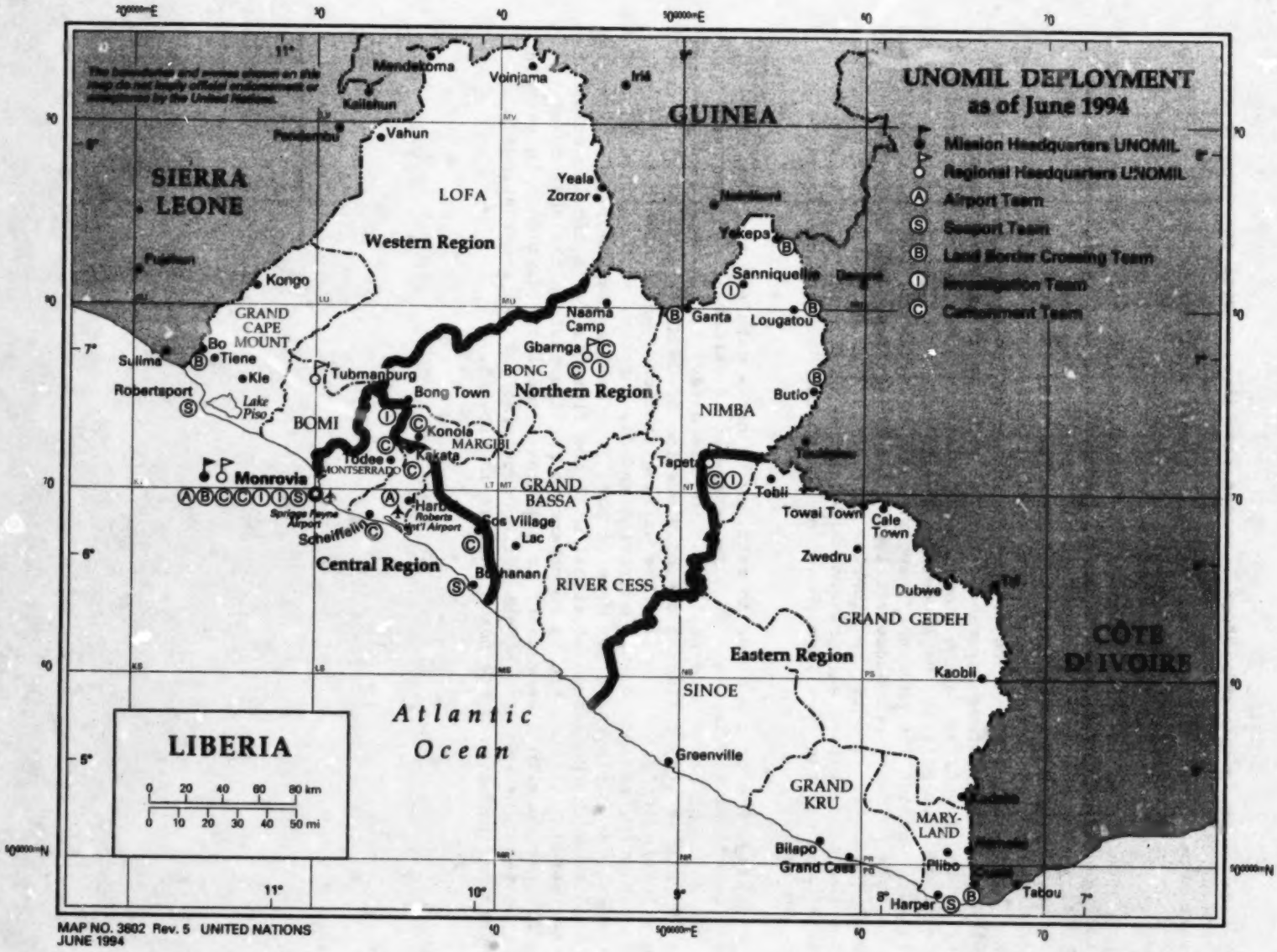
48. The emergence of two new factions in Liberia after the signing of the Cotonou Agreement, and the split within ULIMO, have substantially added to the difficulties of implementing the Agreement. I call upon the Liberian National Transitional Government to exercise the responsibility of bringing together all the parties in Liberia with a view to agreeing and carrying out measures aimed at addressing the problems raised by the new factions (the Liberian Peace Council and the Lofa Defence Force) and the split within ULIMO.

49. The Liberian National Transitional Government must also take drastic measures to advance the peace process and pave the way for elections in accordance with the Cotonou Agreement. Liberians must quickly decide on the electoral system that will be most feasible in their present circumstances, bearing in mind that an estimated 40 per cent of the voting population is displaced. Taking all these factors into consideration, it is essential that the Liberian National Transitional Government, with the cooperation of ECOWAS and the assistance of UNOMIL, bring all the Liberian parties together to agree on specific steps that must be taken to ensure that the elections are held on

schedule. Time is now very short. Unless the Liberian National Transitional Government, the Elections Commission and the Liberian parties take drastic measures now, there is a serious danger that they will not be able to hold the elections on schedule.

50. I should point out that there is a limit to the extent to which the United Nations and the international community can continue to accept delays by the Liberian parties in the implementation of the Cotonou Agreement, which they voluntarily signed. Delays by the Liberian parties in advancing the peace process necessarily compound the financial difficulties experienced by the ECOMOG troop-contributing countries in maintaining their contingents in Liberia. Should the peace process experience further undue delays, some ECOMOG troop-contributing countries may be compelled to withdraw their contingents from the force, thus jeopardizing the successful implementation of the peace process. Obviously, without the necessary support and cooperation of ECOMOG, UNOMIL would not be able to carry out successfully the mandate entrusted to it by the Security Council. Should the Liberian parties fail to maintain their commitment to the peace process, I will have no alternative but to recommend to the Security Council that the involvement of the United Nations in Liberia be reconsidered.

51. Finally, I urge the Liberian factions to set a date for the complete cessation of hostilities, which is necessary for disarmament and preparations for elections to begin, and to live up to this date. I will report on progress made in this regard, including the continuation of UNOMIL's mandate in my next report to the Security Council. The warring factions, which have been responsible for so much death, suffering and destruction, must realize that it is they who are delaying a new dawn of hope for the Liberian people. It is they who must show the necessary political will and flexibility in finding solutions to the present impasse. It is important to realize that in the absence of tangible progress in disarmament, it will be increasingly difficult to sustain the commitment of the troop-contributing countries and the international community to supporting the peace process in Liberia.



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